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**Michalopoulos (M.): In the name of Lykourgos
The Rise and Fall of the Spartan Revolutionary Movement (243-146 BC)**

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Miltiadis Michalopoulos, *In the Name of Lykourgos: The Rise and Fall of the Spartan Revolutionary Movement (243-146 BC)*. Translated by Marion Kavallieros and Maria Anna Niforos. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2016. Pp. xxxvi, 258. ISBN 9781783030231. \$39.95.

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The rise and fall of the enigmatic city state of Sparta have puzzled historians from antiquity up to the modern day. Built on the pillars of the principles of the legendary lawgiver Lycurgus, Sparta was known by ancient historians as an anomaly compared to the rest of Hellas; promoting such values as military discipline, self-sacrifice, asceticism, and physical and moral endurance, which ultimately created a complete subjection and loyalty to the city state by its citizens. In *In the Name of Lykourgos*, Miltiadis Michalopoulos studies the importance of this myth in Hellenistic Sparta, and thus engages refreshingly with a period of Spartan history that has not been covered extensively in modern scholarship. The study centres on the reigns of the three Spartan kings, Agis IV (245-241), Cleomenes III (235-222) and Nabis (207-192), who all, in different ways, sought to save the Spartan state from complete collapse in the third century. It is Michalopoulos' hypothesis that these three rulers represent a "revolutionary movement", aiming to redirect the fate of Sparta by reinstating the traditional principles of Lycurgus.

The book consists of an introduction, six chapters, four appendices and a thorough notes section. In the introduction (pp. xi-xxvii), Michalopoulos focuses on the origin and nature of the Lycurgan constitution, and this leads him into the crucial discussion of possible reasons for the decline of the Spartan system in the fourth century. Michalopoulos argues that the practice of giving large dowries to daughters, in combination with a decline in manpower, led to an irreversible concentration of property in fewer and fewer hands (p. xxi). As owning property and paying the monthly fee for the *Syssitia* were essential requirements of a Spartiate, only a few could uphold their citizenship. Although Michalopoulos points to the wider economic, moral and social context of the third century, where the majority of Greek city states had trouble responding to the new political and military reality, he could have done more to address other perspectives relevant to the issue: was it fear, pride or something else that prevented the Spartans from changing the system? Did the military innovations in Thebes and Macedonia simply outdo the Spartan way? Did the status and influence of the Helots prevent Sparta from establishing hegemony, as engaging in foreign affairs would then jeopardise their control of the southern Peloponnese? It seems that numerous problems challenged the viability of the Spartan system at the same time, and a wider discussion of the entanglements of these different historical lines of development would have strengthened the opening chapter.

Despite the humiliating Spartan defeat at Leuctra in 371, there was no eagerness to reform the system. This unfortunate downward spiral continued until the middle of the third century, when three rulers in turn tried to oppose the development by establishing a new Spartan hegemony; battling against the great powers of Macedonia, Syria, Egypt and Rome. In chapter 1 (“Dawn”, p. 1-16), Michalopoulos discusses the reign of Agis IV. He ascended the throne in 245 with the revolutionary aim of expanding the number of citizens by redistributing property and cancelling debts. However, Agis’ agenda was opposed in the *Gerousia* by a countermovement led by the co-monarch Leonidas II, and the dispute ended with the execution of Agis in 241 without any reform of the system. Although the reforms never took root, Michalopoulos’ point is that the first important seeds were planted in these years.

Chapter 2 (“Zenith”, p. 17-83) covers the pivotal period of the reform movement in the 220s. In 235, the son of Leonidas, Cleomenes III, ascended the Spartan throne and, paradoxically enough, he was to be the one to implement fully the revolutionary reforms of Agis. Through the redistributing of land and cancellation of debts, Cleomenes was able to enlarge the Spartan army drastically. This provided him with enough power to challenge the Achaean League. Although he carried out several successful campaigns in the early years, the Cleomenean War culminated at Sellasia in 222 with Cleomenes’ decisive defeat by Antigonos Doson III of Macedonia. The Spartan reformer ended up in exile in Egypt under Ptolemy III, but a failed coup against the Egyptian king in 219 ultimately ended his life. Michalopoulos provides the reader with a discussion in depth of the political and military development of the 220s, and specifically his treatment of the battle of Sellasia stands out as one of the strongest sections of the book.

Chapter 3 (“Eclipse”, p. 84-93) is a short intermezzo treating the years between Cleomenes and Nabis, where Sparta was forced to obey Macedonia and the Achaean League, which made it rather similar to the situation in 338 where Philip II controlled the Greeks in the Corinthian League. The chapter ends with the Spartan tyrant Machanidas’ defeat at Mantinea in 207 by an Achaean alliance led by Philopoemen.

Chapter 4 (“Twilight”, p. 94-123) begins in the aftermath of the Spartan defeat at Mantinea and the new ruler Nabis’ plan to rescue Sparta once again from a hopeless political and military situation. Nabis made the radical moves of integrating the Helots into Spartan society, circulating money, walling the city, creating a fleet and abolishing the mandatory payment for the *Syssitia* and the old institutions of kingship and ephors (p. 99). On top of that, Nabis had territorial ambitions, and this soon led him into conflict with the Achaean League and the Roman Empire. History repeated itself and Sparta was conquered by the Roman general Flamininus in 195, and Nabis himself was assassinated in 192 by his very own allies from the Aetolian League. In the chapter, Michalopoulos nicely shows that Nabis’ tyrannical reign was hated at the time, but also that posterity judged him harshly for his extreme revolutionary agenda. His death marked the end both of the revolutionary movement and Sparta as an independent city state.

Chapter 5 (“Pax Achaica”, p. 124-134) covers the years to 146, where Sparta was forced into the Achaean League and never again managed to start a new movement towards independence. With the complete Roman domination of the Greek world after the destruction of Corinth in 146 Sparta became a “free city” in the Roman sense, acting as a historical tourist attraction for the Roman elite.

In the final chapter (“Pax Romana”, p. 135-150), Michalopoulos evaluates the nature and character of the “Spartan revolutionary movement” and its connection to the Spartan tradition. It is his conclusion that the agendas of Agis, Cleomenes and Nabis belong in the same historical framework: they sought to reverse the loss of Messenia in the fourth century and restore the old Lyncurgan institutions through a redistributing of land and a cancellation of debts. However, Michalopoulos argues the appeal to

Classical Sparta was only to justify these new reforms; the reigns of the three rulers in fact undermined the Lycurgan elements of the Spartan constitution, and all that was left after the death of Nabis in 192 was the name of Lycurgus, not his spirit and principles from a time where Sparta flourished militarily, politically and culturally.

As we are entirely dependent on a few selective sources to reconstruct the period, the study would have benefitted greatly from a systematic treatment of these scanty sources. Although some of these essential considerations on the works of, for example, Polybius, Pausanias and Plutarch are found in the lengthy (and sometimes more interesting) footnotes at the end of the book, these discussions should occupy a more important place in a historical study of the Hellenistic period. In general, the book is well-written, thoughtful, and Michalopoulos successfully brings to life a period in Spartan history that is too often neglected. The greatest achievement of the study is that Michalopoulos convincingly shows that the reigns of Agis, Cleomenes and Nabis should be seen as a wider revolutionary phenomenon and that the mortal agony of one of the most important and influential city states of Ancient Greece was a continuous struggle beginning in the middle of the third century.

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